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ABSTRACT

Noting that students often adopt a flat, lifeless style when writing a research paper, student papers were examined for evidence of the writer's presence. The presence of the writer is admittedly a subjective perception of the reader, but clues to the presence or absence of the writer can be identified. Though no one clue is definitive evidence, several clues may interact, giving rise to an overall impression of the writer's presence. Seven main indicators of writer's presence did appear in the student papers: (1) personal experience of the writer; (2) authentic tone of voice; (3) emotion expressed through forceful adjectives, adverbs, and exclamations; (4) expression of personal opinion; (5) the use of "I" and "you" to represent writer and reader; (6) evidence of personal investment of time and effort in the subject and writing of the paper; and (7) the writer's style of integrating quotations into the expository text of a research. Research offers several explanations for the frequent lack of writer's presence in research papers. Students may write to the teacher as an authority figure and, as a result, write with less presence. The anxiety of writing to prove knowledge may also lead to an overly formal style. Finally, perhaps the difficulty students have integrating information from outside sources disrupts the process of manifesting their personal presence. (SRT)

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# Writer's Presence in the Research Paper

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David Lieberman
January 16, 1986
Submitted to Lilly Bridwell

CS 209994

# Writer's Presence in the Research Paper

## The Problem

This project began as an inquiry into a problem which I have faced each time I've taught freshman composition. Following the course design at the University of Minnesota I begin my course by encouraging my students to write in a lively way, expressing real interest in the subject matter. I do this by teaching invention techniques like freewriting which emphasize spontaneous expression. I also use journals to encourage students to write about their experiences, and ask students in the first two paper assignments to write about topics which are of personal interest.

The classes make good progress along this route of "writing as exploration;" many of the papers are spirited and original; I feel like a worthy guide and teacher until about the fifth week when the rough drafts come in for the third assignment, a research paper. Suddenly the writing is flat. Students are giving information without the spark of enthusiasm I found in earlier papers. They are more distant, hiding behind passive constructions, and often seem to lose themselves (and the reader) in convoluted sentences or abdicate their own authority altogether in monolithic quotes. In the words of a fellow composition teacher, "it is as if everything we taught them in the first two assignments goes out the window!"

The research paper seems to present students with special problems that undercut their enthusiasm and ease of personal expression. A number of students themselves indicated this in answering the questionnaire which was distributed as part of this inquiry. When asked about their goals in writing the research paper, several responded, "to get it done," "to write five good pages," "to get through it." Research elsewhere has also turned up this feeling of intimidation. Schwartz (1984) has found that students feel that wordy and formal prose is necessary for academic success even when this contradicts their own personal taste in writing style.

Why is it that in research papers students lose their presence as writers? This is the question I have set out to investigate. Through questionnaires, interviews and writing samples I have tried to get a clearer picture of what students confront when they approach the research paper. In this report I will lay out some of the theoretical grounding for my project.

## What is the Writer's Presence?

The presence of the writer in a piece of writing is a perception of the reader who "hears" the author's voice on the page before her or who senses, as one reader has put it, "the writer's presence as if I have the person right in front of me."

Britton's definition of expressiveness in writing comes close to what I mean by the writer's presence. In his influential study on the writing process of British high school students he calls expressive "writing which relies upon a reader's interest in the WRITER as well as in what he has to say." In this definition he ties together the writer's intent with the effect on the reader to arrive at the formulation of "function," encompassing both aspects of written communication. He connects the two on the basis of a shared cultural context in which the meaning reflected in language is held in common by both the writer and reader. I think this is sensible. My concept of writer's presence differs from Britton's "expressiveness" mainly by concentrating on the reader's reaction in this bridge.

There also are two other points of difference. First, I would not say that expressiveness needs to be an intention of the writer. Writers don't always have expressiveness as a goal per se, it's often just the way the writer communicates content, it is a genre of sorts.*

Second, Britton calls writing expressive only where this function predominates over its transactional or poetic functions. I am looking at expressiveness as a characteristic independent from other functions. In the case of research writing the transactional function is usually dominant but I would still call some of it expressive.

To explain this concept further I rely on conversations I have had with two readers I contracted to rate student papers for writer's presence. We discussed the concept and worked through examples to reach a comfortable agreement on what we'd acknowledge as the presence of the writer. Early on in the discussion we scored a breakthrough when one of the readers formulated writer's presence (at that stage we were calling it voice) this way: "When I look for voice it is a question of personal presence or absence. It has nothing to do with what I infer about the writer's effectiveness."

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*Thanks to Robin Brown for the idea of expressive writing as a "genre."

This distinction arose out of a disagreement in reading the following passage:

> Joe paused for a moment at the bottom of the steps, letting his eyes adjust to the bright afternoon sunshine. Leaving the psychiatrist's office was such a relief, he sighed. Joe was classified as mentally retarded and disturbed by the Social Security Administration, and required to see the psychiatrist every two weeks for therapy and a progress check. Therapy and a progress check, in Joe's case, involved enough time for the doctor to fill out a dozen government forms, ask Joe a few questions, and write him out a prescription for medicine that would help Joe "deal with reality." Joe carefully slid the small bottle of pills clutched in his hand into the deep side pocket of his heavy coat and headed across downtown Minneapolis to the rooming house he lived in.

Both readers and myself felt that the passage was artfully written. Joe is depicted vividly, even perhaps with tenderness ("leaving the psychiatrist's office was such a relief, he sighed," "Joe carefully slid," "bottle of pills clutched in his hand"), brought to life by the loving hand of the writer. "But," protested Beth, one of my readers, "that doesn't constitute the presence of the writer. The writer is intentionally absent." After much discussion we all agreed. Though the author's sensitivity and sympathy may be responsible for the vitality of the portrait, this vitality comes about through the concrete details of the scene; the writer himself remains invisible.

Except for one thing. We all felt that the writer successfully contrived to have us realize the irony in Joe's treatment , through the repetition of "therapy and a reality check," and in details like "a dozen government forms" and "medicine that would help Joe 'deal with reality.'" Kent, the other reader felt that here the writer was tipping his hand, as narrator expressing his own point of view through irony. I agreed with Kent but again Beth objected: "I believe he actually did fill out a dozen government forms, and 'deal with reality' might have been read off his report. The irony is from Joe's point of view, not the narrator's." We let our different readings stand in this case. But we did agree on an important principle: Success at moving the reader does not always require that the writer be directly present in the piece, and so it is not what we're looking for in rating for writer's presence -- even though the writer's effort can be inferred in a moving piece.

Likewise, we agreed that success in other areas, such as presenting information clearly or organizing coherently, did not constitute the writer's presence. As Beth said, "I don't have to feel that in looking for the writer's presence I'm judging whether the writing is good or bad."

In rating research papers my readers found several common clues to the presence or absence of the writer. These clues relate to aspects of language use which are hard to systematize. Sometimes the raters looked at characteristics of the text (e.g."I" and "you" pronouns), sometimes at functions of the writing, both intended by the writer and influencing the reader (e.g. persuasion, meaningful interconnection in the arrangement of facts), sometimes at characteristics of the writer (eg.

personal experience), and sometimes at simultaneous characteristics of the text and of the writer (e.g. strong adjectives as a display of emotion, colloquialisms evincing a conversational tone).

These signifiers were not agreed to ahead of the practice rating session but arose tentatively as the raters attempted to explain their scoring of "writer's presence." After several hours of practice they came to function most frequently as clues for the readers anteceding their rating of presence but still, no one indicator was considered definitive evidence. What was important was how these indicators functioned in the context of the whole reading, giving rise to an overall impression of the writer's presence. I will have more to say about this overall impression later on. Now it will be fruitful to look at what these indicators were.

There are seven main indicators that developed for the raters. First, many papers brought in directly the personal experience of the writer. For example lets' look at this passage:

> Billions and billions of bikes as Carl Sagan might say. This is the impression that many people get when they visit a large bicycle shop. The shopper is faced with a tremendous task of finding the best bike for his or her money. For weeks I've been pondering about what bike to buy. There seem to be an endless number of choices yet no choice seems the best. This makes the selection of a bicycle a hard decision.

In this introductory passage the writer presents us with his topic: the difficulty of choosing a bike to buy. In the fourth and fifth sentences he draws in his own experience as a focal point for talking about the problem in general. My raters agreed that in doing this the writer revealed his own presence in this passage.

Sometimes the raters felt that while the writer's personal experience was not brought in explicitly, it was highly likely that some personal experience lay behind the writer's assertions. For example:

> Peer pressure is an important factor (in alcohol abuse) because teenagers want to be liked and respected by their friends. However, peer pressure can be implied. A teenager may feel their friends will act badly toward them if they don't drink while in reality their friends would respect any decision. This peer influence will be important when I talk about prevention later.

In this passage, when the student writes that "teenagers want to be liked and respected by their friends" it seems likely to me that the writer is reflecting on his own experience among teenagers.

The second clue my readers often took to indicate writer's presence was a tone of voice that seemed authentically to belong to the writer. Frequently writers wrote in a conversational tone. As an illustration look at this passage from another student paper:

> With no trusting or close relationships with their parents, a teenager looks to his peers for that meaningful relationship. Experts agree that peers and meaningful friendships are some things suicidal teenagers tend to be in need of. In many cases, frequent family moves have made it tough for any close relationships to develop. In other cases, the child just didn't fit in to the clique of friends and got tired of trying to become a part of it.

In this passage several characteristics of the language are more frequently heard in speech than in academic writing. The writer has included several conversational phrases -- "tough," "fit in" and "got tired." Also, in the phrase "for that meaningful relationship" the "that" has no antecedents in the paragraphs that came before this one. It seems to be a reference to the cultural ideal of having one relationship more special than others. This use of pronouns to refer to something outside the text is typically a habit of speech.

Sometimes there was a tone of voice to a piece of writing that seemed to reflect the personality of the subject or a certain style of writing, for instance pastoral poetry or travel brochure writing rather than the personality of the writer. This was a tricky one: in this situation we recognize a narrative persona but is it really the writer's authentic presence or an imitation (not meant pejoratively) of someone else's style?

We tried to handle it this way: If the writing seemed to have a persona that was inappropriate or unlikely for a student writer we did not choose to call it the presence of the writer; if the style worked easily and was not too unlikely then we saw it as the writer's presence. Admittedly,this was a hazy aspect of the rating. Let's look at the following two passages:

> Diversity has never been a virtue of the typical Twin Cities radio station. This lack of diversity creates a listening audience that is noticeably behind cities of equal size and above when it comes to the listeners' tastes and knowledge of new music.
> One of the ironies of the whole situation is that Prince (a local musician, who just recently has become one of the hottest acts in the music industry) has brought the Twin Cities music scene into the limelight. The Twin Cities has the opportunity of becoming the new trend setter for the rest of the country. Prince has become so big that the rest of the country has turned its attention to the area wanting more. Several bands have come forward and taken a shot at the big time...

> There is no greater treasure in this splendid world of ours than the beautiful and enticing wilderness which surrounds us and the immense variety of creatures that reside there. For millions of years, humans have taken advantage of the environment

> and have used the spoils for various purposes...

In the first passage phrases like "one of the hottest acts," "music scene," "limelight," "the new trend setter," "a shot at the big time" are phrases probably used most commonly in the music industry,or in music industry publications. While it may be indicative of the writer's sympathy with the subject, it is hard to know whether it is authentic or imitative since we don't know the writer apart from the paper. Because the writer used the lingo fluidly we gave him the benefit of the doubt. All three of us gave the paper from which this passage comes a three out of a possible four.

One factor that made us rate the paper less than four was the feeling that this style , even if authentic, slightly cloaks the writer's individuality in the aura of the music scene ethos and distances him from us. Though risky we felt that judgments such as this one were necessary to describe our sense of the writer's presence or absence.

In the second example the phrases "no greater treasure" and "splendid world of ours" are a bit grandiose, probably exaggerating the writer's appreciation for the subject. Ditto for "enticing wilderness" and "immense variety." This writer may be sincere in in his attempt to capture a poetic feeling but all the raters agreed that the result did not seem authentic; it therefore registered with us as a step removed from the author's real presence.

Third, and related to the "tone of voice," was emotion that readers often heard in the writing. forceful adjectives and adverbs most often expressed it, but sometimes writers exclaimed in anger or bewilderment and at other times they made urgent appeals. Here is an example of a moderately emotional passage:

> The government also reduced drastically the number of SCS (Soil Conservation Service) employees and vehicles assigned to each district. This means a much poorer quantity and quality of service provided. Policies such as these hurt the farmer as well as the consumer. The farmer suffers by being ignorant of some useful new conservation practices, while the consumer is hurt because the farmer is not making the best use of his land, which causes production costs to rise and forces prices for the consumer up.

By using emphatic phrases like "reduced drastically," and "a much poorer quantity and quality" the writer shows that she is alarmed by the situation. By saying that the "farmer suffers" also gives a greater emotional cast to the problem than some other phrases would, for instance, "the farmer loses by..." or "the farmer is left ignorant...."

A fourth important indication of writer's presence was where the author expressed a personal opinion, as in the following example:

> As you can see, many Americans resisted the Vietman experience in a number of ways. Some simply illegally fled to Canada while others dishonestly manipulated the legal deferment system. Many people looked at those who fled the country as being criminals and dishonest while I feel that those who took advantage of the deferment system are simply as dishonest. Those who fled to Canada at least dealt openly with their protests. The men who manipulated the laws cannot be held totally responsible however because the rules are set up so loosely that it was made easier for them.

In this passage the author gives her opinion of the relative dishonesty of exiled and non-exiled draft evaders as well as a qualification to her judgment of the non-exiled group. The act of stating her view brings an aspect of herself -her belief- into the text. (In this paragraph I also sense some emotional investment in the sentence, "Those who fled to Canada at least dealt openly with their protests."

There was an important complication in using opinions as indicators of the writer's presence however. Often opinions were stated in discrete paragraphs so a reader could look and say, "Oh. I hear an opinion. The writer is trying to get me to understand her point of view." But occasionally in more sophisticated papers the readers were led toward agreement with the writer by gradual means, often by the mere clarity of how the evidence was presented without much actual insistence by the writer. Does evidence presented in a clear manner in itself display a subtle presence of the writer? Here is an example:

> In the Adirondack Mountains of New York, over 500 lakes have been permanently affected by acid rain (source cited). A study done in the Adirondacks showed that of 200 high altitude lakes sampled, 90% were completely cleared of fish (cit.)
>
> While Minnesota has no acid lakes of this magnitude, the fact that northern Minnesota is receiving an average rain that is at least ten times more acidic than normal rain shows we're headed in the same direction (cit.)

The tone of these two paragraphs is objective. (As a test of this, you could replace "fish" with "dangerous parasites," entirely reversing the import of acid rain, and still have a sensible passage.) The writer presents certain scientific estimates that point to the conclusion - his conclusion - that our lakes are in danger. Through the evidence alone, the passage raises the reader's concern.

The raters and I concluded in our early discussion of the Joe piece that we didn't want to rate writer's presence merely from a paper's effectiveness with its readers. In Joe, a fictional narrative, the readers responded mainly to the scene, and could only infer the writer behind the scene. Similarly, in the Acid Rain passage above the reader responds to an objective set of facts rather than the writer's alarm. However, these facts have as their skeleton the essayistic intent which is to convince the reader. Stories may convince us of certain things also, but it is a greater distance to infer that effect as the intent of the writer than it is in an essay. My impulse is to give the objective strength of the argument some weight in judging the writer's presence but less than other aspects like the tone or emotionality of an opinion. We did not thoroughly hash out this issue though and it remains a source of uncertainty.

A related problem arose where a writer stated a strong opinion in one part of the paper and one rater considered this an underlying influence throughout the paper, and thus a pervading presence while the other rater looked at the text more in a piece by piece fashion. This point caused the most disagreement among the raters.

Fifth. Often where a writer stated an opinion, related personal experience, conveyed emotion or spoke in a conversational tone of voice the writer used "I" to express herself. The readers found this to be a strong indication of the writer's presence. Also when the writer addressed the reader as "you" readers tended to see this as an aspect of presence since the writer was engaging in a person-to-person communication.

A sixth indicator was where writers gave the impression of having thought a lot about the material ahead of time, evincing some investment in the subject. Here the writing transmitted the writer's presence through her apparent interest in the subject. The opposite situation was also noteworthy, where writers listed information which did not have much interrelationship, presenting disconnected facts or cataloguing without seeming to savor the significance of the information. Compare these two passages:

> Sixth, other causes (of business decline in the U.S.) exist, including natural disasters, poor business location, and lack of innovation needed to modernize and maximize the efficiency of the business. These six general causes lead to the four basic results of the downfall of a business. First, the business may cut employees. Second, they will probably raise its prices. Third...

> Many people don't like soccer because it is too boring. One of the reasons for this is that the games are too long. A professional game consists of two forty-five minute halves, with no stoppages during the play. We are used to breaks in the game, between innings in baseball, between plays in football, and time outs in basketball. These breaks let us relax for a couple of seconds, allowing us to concentrate better during the actual playing time. Soccer doesn't have these breaks. After a while a person's concentration and attention fade, causing them to lose interest in the game.
>
> It is also said that there isn't much action in soccer. "Americans are spoiled by football and basketball, where there is always a threat to score."4 Another thing that leads to less action, is the fatigue experienced by the players...

In the first piece of writing prominence is given to the catagorization of causes and effects so that the reader beholds a gridwork of six causes and four results. As for content, there is no contour in which some facts are highlighted more than others, thus we get no sense of their individual bearings on the problem.

In the second example the writer also lists the reasons for a phenomenon (why people don't like soccer) but the reasons are elaborated to show in more detail their relationship to the problem. The writer seems to have a greater appreciation of their importance for the situation he is talking about.

The point is not just that the second writer is skilled enough to elaborate, or to recognize the need to do so (though he may be more skilled than the first writer), but that IN the elaboration the writer demonstrates an appreciation for - and interest in - the subject. This is less apparent in the first passage.

The final indicator to the presence of the writer is particular to research writing. It has to do with the way quotes and obvious paraphrases are integrated into the main text. Some writers who presented ideas from outside sources were able to adapt them to fit into their own flow of ideas and their own tone. Other writers were not able to do this as well. Look at the following excerpt:

> To answer the question, "Is a Private Education really worth it?" is very hard to do in a general way. I can only speak for myself. for me the answer is definitely Yes! Along with all of the private school advantages that I have mentioned, there were many more subtle, less obvious intangible qualities to my private school experience. Dr. Joanna Giessen gave the Baccalaurate Address to my Graduating class of 143 students from the Academy of Holy Angels last June. Excerpts from her address sum up my feelings of these other worthwhile advantages.
>
> "But there is yet another dimension to this graduation... it transcends our hopes, fears and guilt.
>
> "It is this place. there is a spirit that lives within this old building that generates love and cofidence, Holy Angels was built on dreams and expectations.
>
> "-It is a house of learning
> -A place that breeds friendship, love and compassion
> -And God dwells here..." (the quote continues for another half page)

This is an extreme example of a writer giving over her presence to somebody else's voice. This absencing usually occurs less dramatically. Compare these two examples:

> Getting radio play in the Twin Cities is as likely as a student from a middle class family getting financial aid, nearly impossible. Jeff Cerise, lead singer fo the band, "The Phones" likens it to "pulling teeth." "No one seems to want to take a chance, Prince had to dominate the nations top ten before the local stations gave him any notice. Listening to the dj's now, you would think that it was the local stations that made him. The popular stations in this town are two faced and commercialized beyond belief." If Jeff Cerise sounds a little bitter its because he and his band have been trying to break into the big time for several years now with no apparent success.

> There are some people who think the Stun Gun should be banned. They think that people will run around shocking others, at will. This is not true. "The Stun Gun is not just another cattle prod or shocking device, that burns the skin or risks stopping and/or interfering with the rhythm of the heart, but is a device that eliminates the use of those types of deadly weapons." (Nations Business) Christianson says that these people are making one sided judgments. "I was hired by some of these people to prevent damage to their property and to see to the protection of their families. There are a lot of violent criminals, and these people are condemning a device that lets me safely do my job."
>
> The sales pitch being used by the manufacturers and distributors...

In the first example the writer blends his own introduction of the quote right into the quote itself ("Jeff Cerise... likens it to 'pulling teeth.'") He follows the quote with a commentary, again blending it into his own flow of thought.

In the second example, the writer presents two quotes. Though they fit well in the paper's development of ideas, the writer does not follow them with his own comments so that they predominate over the writer's voice in the passage.

Associated with these seven indicators of the presence of the writer are signals as to the writer's absence, particularly where something which routinely or easily occurs is missing. This happened most commonly as writers avoided using "I," "you," or other aspects of conversational style to produce a more formal and distant tone. Consider these two examples: How should one prepare for a future that may never come? That's the question that American children are faced with today. The problem at hand is the threat of nuclear war and its effects on the children who are growing up with it.

> Students hesitate to choose a major because they don't know what it is they want to do, and they feel a major will restrict their career opportunities. In actuality, your college major may not even be related to your career objective. A book called What Can I Do With a Major In...? shows current occupations of people with majors in various fields. At the time of the survey, English majors held jobs as various as accounting, actor, architect, FBI agent, and urban planner (source cited). Barbara Walters majored in English (cit.). Since your college degree clearly opens up many doors, you don't need to distinguish your exact career goal before choosing a major. What is crucial, however, is that you have an objective view of your skills and talents; then you can later match those abilities with specific jobs (cit.).
>
> To aid in discovering just what your abilities are, a variety of techniques have been explored by the Catalyst Staff...

In the first passage, "one" replaces the more familiar you, we or a person. "The problem at hand" expresses the idea more impersonally than, say, "our problem."

In the second passage, the writer has in a few places chosen a number of words and syntactical constructions slightly more formal than their possible equivalents: "in actuality" for "in fact," "your career objective" for "what you eventually want to do," "distinguish" for choose, "to aid in discovering" for "to help you discover." At the same time though she addresses the reader directly. Her style is thus a mixture of formal and informal, distance and presence.

'Absence' also played an important role where the writing conspicuously lacked opinion. This was especially true for the papers we looked at since all of the students' teachers encouraged them to take on topics which they could invest themselves in and to present their own opinions.

As I mentioned earlier, these clues did not function as absolute indications. It was not only the presence or absence of indicators which was important but how they were used. Compare the following two passages in which the writers used "I."

> I have searched and searched to find a logical reason why child pornography shouldn't be totally condemned from all of society, so, none has come up.
>
> ...Can a person place a pricetag on artistic creativity? For creativity plays a very integral and necessary part in a person's life. Schools do put a pricetag on creativity, the budget. Because of rising costs, schools have had to cut back, and the art department has suffered. As an example, I will use St. Louis Park Senior High School and its art department.

In the first passage the "I" emotionally informs us of an intense self-exploration. In the second excerpt "I" is used primarily to move the reader along; the "I" also introduces what is probably an example from personal knowledge, though the writer implies that it is significant only as an illustration. The raters and myself felt that the second passage displayed a much meeker presence of the writer than in the first.

Even a person writing about her own experience could fail to transmit much presence if she didn't have any investment in the tale. What it comes down to is that all of these clues - use or avoidance of "I," opinion or lack of it, personal experience, etc. - drew our attention to something basic: the writer's engagement or lack of engagement with the text, i.e. what seemed to be the writer's investment in either the topic or the writing task.* Beyond the mere artifacts of the writer's self (which did count for something in themselves) this, at bottom, is what we were looking for as the substance of the writer's presence.

The presence of the writer is a complex phenomenon in which readers react to many cues, at times contradictory. I believe that a reader essentially makes a unitary response in rating for writer's presence, spontaneously balancing the various cues.

Many times it was possible in our scoring sessions to make spontaneous integrated responses in rating for writer's presence. But in cases where the "threads" went off in different directions, as when a very personal subject was reported with great formality, more deliberation took place. Sometimes one rater focused on one indicator while the other rater drew off of another indicator. Toward the end of the day, probably because we were getting tired, it became more difficult to focus on an 'over-all' presence and my raters tended to emphasize particular strands, disagreeing more often also.

But the raters did arrive at the same score for a substantial

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(*Different indicators commonly indicate different kinds of engagement. Opinion, display of emotion and the meaningfully interconnected arrangement of facts generally evidence concern for the subject. A conversational tone, the use of "you" and also the use of personal example are personal forms of communicating content; they are therefore means of involvement in the writing task. Telling about personal experience also probably connects one to the topic itself, conveying engagement in the topic. Using "I" can indicate involvement in the subject or the writing task.

share of the papers. Here are passages from two such papers, plus one where there was disagreement:

> A far more serious effect of sunbathing can occur after years of sun worship and it too involves melanin. This melanin which collects at the surface, gives you a nice tan and also prevents further radiation from slipping by your skin. But only 90% of the radiation is trapped by melanin, the other 10% slips by, enters the body and smashes into living cells. This splits up DNA molecules, the genetic material found in our cells' nucleus. The DNA then naturally joins together again, but sometimes in an abnormal fashion. To rearrange the DNA in correct order, enzymes are produced by the body, but after many hours in the sun the body can no longer produce enzymes. The DNA molecules are then left in their disarray and are able to produce a colony of mutant cells, identical to themselves. These mutant cells may become cancerous.

> Medical clinics were formed to give people a chance receive (sic) medical attention from a specialist. This is a great idea, but noone considered what is lost in the change over from family doctors. Since the doctors are not directly dependant on the business of an individual, they have lost the incentive to be kind to their patients. This actually can make the patients worse. Some doctors may choose to work in a clinic because they do not have to get emotionally involved, yet being a doctor their duty (sic) is to help people and that commitment should involve helping in every way possible. With psychology it can be made easy. Because emotions play such a major role in sickness, the doctors should attempt to create a positive mental state. This will help the clinic retain its business and help patients to a speedy recovery.

> As the calendar years are put into the past the youths that run away has skyrocketed (sic). Those who run leave for a variety of reasons. Some of the more common reasons include physical abuse alcohol or drug abuse, and disagreement with family members. Runaway youth don't realize the possible dangers they could encounter on the streets. Prostitution, rape, crime, and drug addiction to name a few of the possible serious incidents. There are many alternatives the runaway should consider such as where to go, finances, and the transportation used for their destination. The alternatives to running

> away include discussing problems with a family member, friend, or seeking professional help. Many youth who run away decide to return home after a period of time. This moment is one that must be handled delicately. If the first meeting goes well chances are the problems will work out.

Both raters gave the paper from which I took the first passage a 1, the least score for writer's presence. The author provides the information clearly, "revealing investment in the topic." (rater 1) She also uses words that "slant the evidence" (rater 2), like "sun worship" and "smashes into living cells." But what registered most strongly for both raters was that the paper is a straight report of facts without much opinion.

The paper containing the second passage got a score of 4, the highest rating for presence of the writer, from both readers. They noted that the writer's tone is conversational ("great idea") and subjective ("Being a doctor their duty is to help people"). In other parts of the paper, the raters noted, the writer talks about her own experience at a clinic and at many places expresses her own opinion in an emotional way.

For the paper about runaways one rater gave a 4 explaining that the writer keeps a conversational tone - "a kid presence" - and that she makes many generalizations with little source material. The second rater, giving the paper a 1, noted that it was mainly factual except where she gives advice which "seems pulled from another source rather than from the writer" (!), though he considered raising it to a 2 because of the writer's empathy with runaways.

## Other Research

Several veins of research have implications into possible causes for the difficulty students have bringing personal presence into their research papers. Britton (1974) in his influential study has shown how the role of teacher as examiner inhibited expressiveness in writing among British students. It could be that students who look at the teacher as the main authority and write primarily to win the teacher's approval or good evaluation will tend to write with less presence. Conversely, students who are interested and involved in their assignments for intrinsic reasons might well bring more of themselves into the writing.

Another line of research has uncovered student expectations about what proper academic writing looks like. Rafoth and Combs (1983) report that freshmen in their study did not judge complex sentences as reflecting a writer's authoritativeness and character. However, Schwartz (1984) has found that students do believe professors prefer prose that is wordy, complex and formal. Brown and Herndl (1985) suggest that it may be the anxiety itself of having to prove yourself in writing that leads to superfluous nominalizations. Perhaps students' conceptions and anxieties about proper academic form interfere with the development of a writer's presence.

A third body of research suggests that some of the cognitive tasks which confront students in research writing present special difficulties. Kennedy (1985) has investigated the skills needed to write from outside sources - particularly what is involved in reading with comprehension, summarizing, and synthesizing new information. Others have looked at these activities individually (Brown and Day, etc.). Maybe the difficulty students have integrating information from outside sources disrupts the process of manifesting their personal presence. Other theorists have focused on different aspects of cognitive development. Perry, for instance, has uncovered the difficulty that students have in moving from a dualistic world view to one which attempts to integrate different points of view, a common task in research writing. Bloom has analyzed cognition into a hierarchy of functions some of which are newly encountered by students in research writing. These and other approaches would be interesting to examine in relation to the writer's presence but in this project I will limit my scope to the difficulty student writers have incorporating outside sources.

These, then, are three influences on writer's presence I will investigate in this project -- personal involvement in the writing process, conceptions and anxieties about academic form, and the difficulty of integrating sources in the research paper. I will also try to examine the relationship between these factors.

## So What?

Britton asks at the end of a recent article on expressive writing: "So what?" Likewise, why should we be concerned with the presence of the writer? Two reasons. First, Britton in his earlier study showed how beginning writers use an expressive mode and that this is a necessary training ground for other kinds of writing. And it certainly makes sense -- a writer must be able to express what a subject means to her in a straightforward way before she can learn the techniques to write meaningfully about a subject without displaying her own presence.

But writing with presence is more than just a learning tool. It is a rich and wonderful way to write -- rich in the texture of reason and feelings it gives rise to, and wonderful in its vulnerability and its embrace of the reader. These qualities bring joy into the writing process and deepen it.

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